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# **As The Fire Burned**







ELLMORE J. GILSTRAP

WIFE, MARY EDNA AND  
DAUGHTER ELIZABETH  
JOSIPHINE



# AS THE FIRE BURNED

A Volume of Poems

by

ELLMORE JACKSON GILSTRAP

Author of

"Renaissance  
and  
Other Poems"



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To Mary  
With appreciation for her strong though  
gentle influence as wife and mother  
This Volume is Lovingly  
Dedicated.

Ms. A. 7. 10. 16  
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## NOTE

It has been suggested to the author that he make a selection from his poems, of those most enjoyed by his friends and publish it in book form; this volume is presented in accordance with the suggestion.

The preface to "Renaissance and Other Poems" is slightly changed and given to this book as several of the poems contained here-in are from that volume.

## PREFACE

Man is a poetic creature; he was created in the image of the Creator of the universe, which harmonizes and proceeds with infinite grace and majestic rhythm. I believe the man or woman does not live who has not regarded so far that, at times his or her veins are not flushed with a poetic tingle as the conscience, speaking, says, "Jehovah reigneth, let the people tremble; He sitteth above the cherubim, let the earth be moved". Therefore, I am presenting this little book to my friends, -- all of whom are poets -- not as a peer among the masterpieces of literature, but simply as a little sunbeam of God's love filtering through the sun-glass of my imagination, and falling, I hope, into some dark corner vibrating a cord of sympathy in some isolated life, or resting some mind, busy with the cares of much serving, I shall be happy if it pleases my friends who have requested me to publish it, since they have been so near to me and have brought sunshine into my life.

— AUTHOR

“A cheerful heart is a good medicine”.  
Prov. 18 : 22

# **"AS THE FIRE BURNED"**

## **PROLOGUE**

"I was musing and the fire burned,"  
This said an ancient poet  
And lifted his heart to the Infinite  
Then feebly in words expressed  
The reach of his lofty muse  
As it scanned the path of a boundless existence.  
Thus every poet,  
With infinity centered upon him,  
Turns, with the hunger of a conscious limitation  
To the fullness of the expanse of Deity,  
Above, below, and in every direction,  
Then back to the depths of his soul;  
For an assurance of befitting destiny.

Upon the hearth the glowing embers crackle  
But within the breast  
The fire of passionate intelligence burns.

So the great questions of life are ever asked  
 As the mysteries of Jehovah's heart  
 Are revealed in conquering blaze;  
 And the victory which shapes the future of millions  
 Is won at the hearth-stone.  
 A half a hundred centuries back  
 Upon God's high-way; turn about and see  
 Primeval man, in lowly quarters bending,  
 His repast to prepare.  
 In his forest, prehistoric;  
 Beautiful still as any wild thing,  
 The lightening bolted free as now,  
 Came and went unchallenged,  
 Nor waited the device of man  
 His thoughts to flash across the heaven  
 Or load to lift.  
 His fuel gathered neath those ancient boughs;  
 That proud, tho simple mind contrives,  
 How different from the beast,  
 To bring the Deity within his grasp  
 And use the mystic power.  
 Then flint to flint and steady stroke,  
 The spark!- again the spark is dropped  
 And now the tinder blazes.  
 Who dares to say it was not God  
 Who made that spark successful,  
 And as the light leaped on and on  
 Revealed the path to civilization's noon-day?  
 Who dares to say that any path to civilization leads  
 And passes not thru fire?

Me thinks, before that bon-fire died  
That glorious autumn even,  
Our fathers gathered round  
To feast their hearts and vent imagination:  
Who dares to say man would have found  
That God made him a poet  
Had he not found the vital spark  
That bade him be a conqueror--  
"Primeval man a conqueror?"--  
He even dares to rise from the musings of that fireside  
To mount the skies, and place his hand in God's,  
Then with that heavenly vision on his heart  
Subdue the earth, Make divesting floods  
And parched desserts clasp their hands  
In graceful union, and send forth a blessing.

The fire in his breast aglow--  
The fire on the forge leaps up  
To melt the hearts of iron mountains  
And stamp divine impressions on them.  
Yet in man's breast a devil hides  
And gins at such achievements,  
And prompts satanic motives  
Where virtue breathes a blessing on intelligence.  
So hatred springs from virtue  
As man views man's enlightenment  
Nor reckons yet with God,  
But turns his lofty powers to rain destruction  
And shed a brother's blood.

“I was musing and the fire burne<sup>d</sup>”  
Two blazing altars stand,  
Two brothers musing by them  
One is the world’s first faithful son  
The world’s first murdered brother  
Whose God-accepted sacrifice  
Adorns the ancient fire.  
Oh! Unhappy Cain,  
What murderous vipers issue  
From thy unfaithful fire,  
To fasten on thy musing heart;-  
How soon the action springs.

Candid beauty and cunning treachery  
And all the associated passions rise;-  
Now the fire sparkles cherrily  
Now it dies away, and ugly shadows  
Grotesque and lurking,  
Encroach upon the smouldering embers.  
So the world’s great deeds, both good and bad,  
From humble firesides issue;  
And the history of the world we read  
In the musings at her burning altars.

Stir up the coals till the flame shoots forth  
The muse, right heartily to welcome,  
Nor president account worthy  
Whose arbitrary limits  
Obscures the real and vivid.



## MUSIC

God verily loveth music;

His creation lauds Him with song;  
From the Murmuring trees  
That are swayed by the breeze.  
To the tide as it rolleth on.

The little birds of the forest,  
Which twitter their carols so sweet,  
In the wide spreading fields  
And the beautiful dells,  
Do verily God's song repeat.

And thou; my soul, my inmost self,  
Shalt not refuse a song,  
When stream and breeze and bird,  
In harmony are heard,  
And nature sings God's sweetest song.



## MAPLE LEAVES

On the moss-covered bank of the river  
I listened one summer day,  
To the gentle murmuring waters;  
As they went on their long, long way.

The zephyrs of summer, waving  
The foliage on the banks;  
The perfume, sound and symmetry  
Spoke mutual returning of thanks.

A maple tree hung o'er the river  
Among all the other trees,  
With its old moss-covered body  
Hidden among its leaves.

Though the autumn was only beginning,  
There were signs of early decay,  
For among the green hosts, living,  
Shone a few golden leaves that day.

The breezes rocked them, whispering:  
"It were sweeter to float away  
From your living leaf-friends, busy  
Adorning the maple all day"

Ah! the gentle urging and coaxing  
Was more than the heart could stand;  
So a leaf bore down on the breezes  
To the bosom of the strand.

And I watched as it tossed and floated  
In the cradle so lately found,  
Away from the gnarled old maple,  
O'er the shimmering waves, beyond,  
As I tarried, watching the river,  
A flood of thoughts came fast,  
And I gazed on the weltering path-way  
Until many a leaf had passed.

To see them so gently nestle  
In those soft waves, moving on;  
Brought thoughts of the tired pilgrim  
As he goes to the great beyond

Of the silver waves, I inquired  
Where the leaves at last were to be.  
On those zephyrs born, came the answer back:  
"They will be in Eternity".

God spoke to me on that self-same day  
On those very same zephyrs, born,  
Came a message sweet, from His very lips,  
And it makes my pulse beat warm.

For that message sweet, still compells a thought,  
    "As the beautiful leaves float on:  
Has your influence graced life's maple tree?  
    Then with joy you shall go beyond.

"And the ebb and the flow and the swelling,  
    Of the stream to Eternity;  
Nor of sorrowing thoughts will be telling  
    Nor forboding of what shall be,

"But the waves shall speak in harmony  
    The reward of beautiful life;  
And the hearts left behind, the eulogy:  
    'The balm of thy presence was life' "



## JOSIPHINE

TUNE:

*"Rose, Rose, Rose."*

Who is sweeter, tell me,  
Than our Josiphine?  
Graceful in her actions;-  
Lovely little queen.

### CHORUS

Josiphine,  
Prettiest flow'r I've seen;  
Token of love sent down from Heaven-  
How could a sweeter gift be given?  
Josiphine,  
Sweeter than any dream,  
Purer than Springtime's breath  
May she e'er remain  
Sweet Josiphine.

If we knew her language  
Could she, think you, tell  
"Of that blessed country  
Where the Angels dwell?"

## THE EARLY BUTTERCUP

*This, the author's first poem, was written  
January 25th. 1907*

After a thaw in January,  
The snow lay on the flats;  
Jack Frost, with fun and fury,  
Danced o'er the hills' bare backs.

He noticed, as he passed along,  
A buttercup in full bloom;  
She surely heard a snow-bird's song  
And came out all too soon,

"I'll teach her," he thought,  
"For she breaks winter's rule;  
This night she'll drink a cup  
Of experience, extremely cool,"

"Hey there! little buttercup.  
Aren't you pretty cold?  
'Tis too early you've got up.  
What made you be so bold?

“You should have slept on,  
To awake with the spring  
And hear the wild birds’ song;  
As they sweetly sing.”

“Oh yes, it is bleak;  
But I don’t mind, the least;  
When I can give those who seek  
The vernal fragrance, a feast”

“Oh no,” said Jack Frost,  
“You are surely mistaken;  
And I’ll not be bossed  
Until winter’s forsaken.

“And tonight you shall see,  
To your dissatisfaction,  
Where you will be  
With such a notion.”

But Jack’s brother, North Wind,  
While eaves-dropping about,  
Heard, and thought it a shame  
Cruelly to blot her out.

So he set off with a skip  
And gathered together  
A downy white blanket  
As soft as a feather

And e'er night fell on her  
She was tucked snugly in,  
Away from Jack's torture,  
By her friend, North Wind.

Where she slept undisturbed  
Till the thaw in the spring,  
When again she appeared;  
To hear the wild birds sing.

### *Moral*

All months have their sorrows,  
All seasons their pain,  
But there's always a flower.  
E'en in Winter's cold reign.





## ROSES

AWAY o'er the eastern mountains,  
Is a green little valley of flowers,  
Crossed by a limpid river,  
Hiding beneath the bowers;  
There's where my heart gently leads me  
As the twilight softly falls;  
There in fancy now I see you  
And hear your gentle call.

Ah! well I remember the evening,  
Though months and the years have flown,  
When I placed a ring on your finger,  
And you said your heart was my own.  
Ah, darling, don't you remember?  
The roses were wet with dew;  
You picked me a crimson bud, and asked,  
"Will the return of the roses do?"

The roses have come and gone, dear,  
And we are far apart;  
But time or distance, dear,  
Can never change my heart.  
And alone in the solemn twilight  
I offer this earnest prayer,  
“When next I stray amongst roses,  
May my own little Rose be there.”



## MY PRAYER

JESUS, Savior, I would pray thee,  
    Bowing here before thy feet,  
To look kindly on Thy servant,  
    While I solemnly entreat.  
Wouldst thou cheer me when I sorrow,  
    Let thy light shine on the way.  
Be my guard in all temptation,  
    Near me would'st Thou always stay.

Jesus, Savior, friend of sinners,  
    I would live and die for thee.  
Teach me how to win the tender  
    To Thy fold; where'er they be.  
As I ripen in Thy knowledge,  
    If it be Thy blessed will,  
I would fight the host of evil,  
    Guarded by Thy mercies still.

Jesus, Savior, strong and mighty,  
Still for grace I do implore;  
Would'st Thou heavenly manna send me,  
'Till I reach the Golden Shore.  
And when angel wings shall bear me  
Safely o'er the dashing foam,  
May I hear Thy voice, dear Savior,  
Welcome me to "Home, Sweet Home".



## A MARRIED DUTCHMAN

Unt zince you axed me;  
Vell; I dell  
Why I am always  
Looking vell,  
Zince I got married.

Ust almost every  
Blessed night,  
I vent me oudt,  
Yah!dot ish right,  
Dill I got married.

Unt vagon bills  
Unt orses doo  
Do dake mine gals,  
Dey made me blue,  
Dill I got married.

Unt somedimes ust  
To be a shport.  
I'd buy fine dings  
Uf every zort.  
Dill I got married.

Unt loost mine shleep  
Unt den mine palls  
Would somedimes make me  
Loost de gals,  
Dill I got married.

Gosh! I vorried  
Like a zinner;  
Dhen I got dhin  
Unt got me schlimer  
Dill I got married.

Now all dhose droubles  
In a hurry  
Left de blace,  
Unt, "I should vorry"  
Zince I got married

Mine gloths don't sphend me  
Quite so now,  
As vhen I didn't  
Got mine frow,  
Zince I got married.

Because she cuts dem  
Half mit dwo, . . . .  
Unt makes me vone  
As goot as new,  
Zince I got married.

Unt now I never  
Bay mine gash  
For oyster zoup  
Unt restaurant hash,  
Zince I got married.

“Ust dirty zents”  
Dwo ice gream zundaes;  
Unt den I fond I’s  
Broke en Mondays --  
Dill I got married.

But vhen I hears de  
Voman say:  
“Yockeb; Dear,  
Its varm to-day”  
Zince I got married.

I valks me off  
Right straight do down;  
You bet mine life  
I never vrown,  
Zince I got married.

Ice gream gones, I get;  
Dey’s fine;  
I gets de dwo for  
Ust vone dime,  
Zince I got married,

Mine vife,she zhurely  
Is a vender;  
She's ust like lightening  
I o de dunc'er,  
Zince I got married.

Unt den ders somedings  
More you know --  
It makes me laugh;-  
You didn't know?  
Zince I got married

Mine vife;she got dwo  
Leddle dwins,  
About as big as  
Dady's shins,  
Zince I got married.

Unt so I'm looking vell,  
Dank you;  
You do like I unt  
You vill doo:  
Ust get married.



## RENAISSANCE

'Tis even;at my study window  
I contemplate the day,  
With its failures and successes  
Marking out the toilsome way.  
And I see my bit of knowledge:  
Science,philosophy and myth,  
As an atom of debris  
Upon the pyramid of truth;  
I see my helmet,shield and breast-plate,  
For defence in mental strife,  
Scarce doth warrant me an entrance  
At the tournament of life  
My acquired refinement,  
Aye,all my polished art,  
Are as thorns and nettles  
In Nature's throbbing heart.

'Tis even;now fades this  
Vernal equinoxial day,  
And from out my study window  
Aphrodite and Demeter say:

“Come into the class room  
Of the beautiful, the true,  
And study renaissance  
Of classics nearer you”  
I betake myself to musing,  
And the blood leaps in my veins,  
As I think how very vaguely  
I have seen God’s divine plan;  
I was made in His own image,  
With judgement, purpose, and with love,  
And I died through my rebellion,  
To induement from above.

So I enter God’s great class-room  
With lessons unprepared,  
But a hungry heart that’s grateful  
For His treasures, with me shared;  
A tongue quite dumb with praises  
Which mere words could never tell  
And a brain that’s not been measured  
By an arbitrary scale.  
For He teaches; not as do  
His humble students, men;  
The achievements and the progress  
On the towpath of mankind.  
Ah, truly they fail  
To teach the whole man,

For they surely are failures  
Who man's mission would find  
Each propelling life's argo,  
These frail Argonauts,  
By things through sensation  
Made analytic thoughts,  
To hear, to taste, to smell, to feel,  
To use the miracle of vision,  
Doth solemn thought and praise compel,  
Yet God gives intuition.

So the teachers I hear  
In this free-thinking class,  
Are the springtime freshets  
And zephyrs that pass;  
Yet my soul is outpoured  
In hearty response  
To the words, as they  
Echoing, say "renaissance;"  
And I try to express  
In my homely way,  
My soul's sweet content  
At the close of this day;  
But though the five senses  
May serve you well,  
A sixth you must have  
If to you I tell

The beauty of holiness;  
Potentiality of faith  
In the gift to creation  
Of universal life.

As the white, fleecy clouds,  
Fringed with purple and gold,  
Like a virgin's white bosom,  
Half concealed in the fold,  
Are swelling to curves  
Of beauty and grace,  
Covering the heart  
Of this grand Renaissance.  
I pray the mighty  
Benefactor of man:  
"May the renaissance of thy Spirit  
In my heart have free reign."



## THE BANQUET

Autumn in splendid livery,  
Graceful as ripened love, is here,  
Nor comes with empty hands.  
Her harvest basket, life to sustain,  
Is emptied at our feet;  
But no good queen is satisfied  
To feed the physical,  
And starve the truer man, the soul;  
So good queen Autumn spreads a feast  
For eyes and ears and heart,  
Then gently lifts the gauzy fringe  
Of summer's wasting curtain  
That we may peep within;  
Our eyes and ears and sense of smell  
And taste and intuition,  
At once are asked to enter,-  
The banquet now is served,  
And course on course brings new surprise  
And strange enchantment fills the heart.

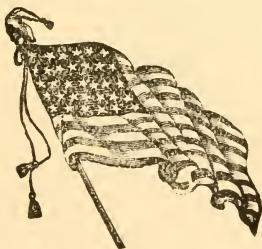
The forest is the banquet hall,  
Nor richer walls have any;  
Each humble leaf in gorgeous beauty  
Contributes to the whole,  
Nor waits complaining for a place  
Of more exalted station.  
Each thrilling song, harmonious,  
Is blended with a thousand,  
Nor discord makes  
Nor asks a special notice.  
Each whispering zephyr,  
Pregnant with a varied fragrance,  
Is wafted in the wake of many kindred breezes,  
Nor claims a freer path  
Down through the trembling foliage.  
Thus all, combining, speak of God  
And infinite agreement;  
A benediction, not in words  
But loving sacrifice.



## CONTRAST

*To Wendell Wilson*

The flags of empires mark the fields  
Of conquest gore and anguish,  
And flaunt their all-assuming pride  
Where millions, wounded languish  
Thank God! "Old Glory" mounts the breeze  
To send a positive message  
Across the waters, born of God,  
Yet to spare His heritage.  
As o'er a hundred battle fields  
Insane with awful carnage,  
The ensigns of delirious pride  
Are torn with devilish rage  
"Old Glory" proudly flings her out  
Above ten thousand school-grounds  
To tell the honor of the race  
Where yet christian peace abounds.



## MEDITATIONS

I lay awake on my pillow last night,  
For sleep had fled afar;  
And watched through the open window  
The twinkling evening star;  
The past reappeared before me,  
And the present vanished, quite;  
And Father Time in his flight turned back  
To my childhood days, last night,  
I seemed to be in the garden,  
With my brother, just younger than I,  
Hoeing and talking and laughing,  
As we did in the days gone by;  
Watching the bees select their flowers,  
And wondering the reason why,-  
Listening to the chirp of the cricket,  
Or catching a butterfly.



At happy the times we spent together  
In woodland and field and meadow;  
And sweet were our thoughts in those happy days  
Before sin had cast his shadow;  
When we sympathized in each other's grief,  
And felt each other's fear;  
But my heart quickly throbbed when I thought:  
"He's been under the sod a year."  
What a cruel life this is to live,  
After one learns to know;  
But sorrows bind love cords closer,  
As heavenward still we go;  
For surely 'tis sweet to think  
Our dear ones have reached their goal,  
"Where the tender Shepherd doth guard with care,  
The lambs of the upper fold."



## EPILOGUE

The baby, frolicking on the floor  
Has dropped her head on her arm  
And is singing her sleepy song once more,  
With a natural and innocent charm,  
Her playthings are pushed back out of sight  
And her mamma is humming the while,  
As she brings her to kiss her papa "good-night"  
And be hugged and petted a while;  
Good-night! good-night! good-night!

The baby is sleeping; fire's out,  
The fire of our pleasant muse;  
The dipper has circled the north star about  
To pour out the mid-night dews;  
'Tis a pleasant time we've had 'tis right,  
Very lovely and pleasant, my dear;  
But the time has come to say "good-night"  
So with all it can mean, my dear.  
Good-night! good-night! good-night!









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